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World Record for Ship-Based Endurance Flight

On 5 August what is believed to be the longest-endurance flight ever made by an aircraft launched and retrieved at sea was completed by The Insitu Group's Seascan miniature robotic aircraft. Seascan Morgan was launched in darkness shortly after 5 am from the Shackleton, a 17-metre salmon seiner underway in Admiralty Bay north of Seattle, and retrieved back aboard shortly before 10 pm using Insitu's patented "Skyhook" system. Flight time was 16 hr 45 min at a speed of around 50 kt. The aircraft and its inertially-stabilized video turret were operated from Shackleton throughout the flight, maintaining continuous real-time surveillance and close inspection of sea conditions and shipping through Admiralty Inlet between Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Guidance was fully autonomous from launch to retrieval. The flight demonstrated a typical mission anticipated in shipboard service, with pre-dawn launch, continuous search and inspection during daylight hours, and post-sunset retrieval. A complementary night capability was also demonstrated, with an infra-red equipped ScanEagle, also launched and retrieved from Shackleton, imaging the same area during the night before the record endurance flight.